

Nor was Wycliffe himself slower than Courtenay to recognise that fear of the anathemas of Rome was the chief support of the ecclesiastical system as it then was. The Pope's ban did not imply spiritual censure only. He could still raise crusading armies to fight for his cause. England was already at war with the three principal nations of Western Europe, and was being worsted in the struggle. If the English government had at this crisis declared against the mediaeval Church system, seized part of the wealth of the English clergy, and deprived them of their most obnoxious privileges, the Pope could have stimulated the ardour of our enemies by preaching a crusade against a nation of heretics. Wycliffe foresaw that he would not only bring into the alliance other princes and commonwealths,<sup>1</sup> but that he would encourage the clergy in England to resist the encroachments of the State.<sup>2</sup> If blessed by Rome, the Bishops and prelates were likely in such an emergency to prefer their Church to their country. All the difficulties and dangers which encountered Henry the Eighth from within and from without, when he effected the destruction of the old ecclesiastical system, would have encountered Richard the Second in a far more aggravated form. Alone, an unpopular Church might have been unable to resist the State ; supported by the Pope and Catholic Europe, she had little to fear from a government already so embarrassed.

In 1376 Bishop Courtenay had come into contact with the government, in his support of the Papal claims. Pope Gregory the Eleventh, being at that time at war with Florence for his own private ends, had issued a bull of interdict against all Florentines the world over. The King of England, who had considerable dealings with their merchants, ventured to take those in his dominions under his special protection ; but in defiance of the royal mandate the Bishop of London published the Pope's bull at St. Paul's Cross and excommunicated all Florentines in the country. The King's Chancellor summoned Courtenay before him, and inquired why he had published the bull without the knowledge of the King and **Council**. \* Because the Pope ordered it,' replied the Bishop.

<sup>1</sup> *Faac. Z.*, 264.

« 8. ft. TF., iii. 27&